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WARRIORS OF THE BLACK MOUNTAINS: PODGORICA.

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

MONTENEGRO

A LAND OF WARRIORS

BY

ROY TREVOR

AUTHOR OF

"MY BALKAN TOUR," "EN ROUTE," ETC., ETC.

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR BY
ALLAN STEWART

LONDON
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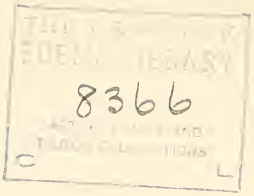

"O smallest among peoples! rough rock-throne
Of Freedom! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islâm for five hundred years,
Great Crnagora! never since thine own
Black ridges drew the cloud and broke the storm
Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers."

—Tennyson.

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TO THE

DEAR PRINCESS

WHO EACH YEAR MAKES MY LIFE

SUNNIER BY HER PRESENCE

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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SKETCH-MAP OF MONTENEGRO.

A

PEEP AT MONTENEGRO

CHAPTER I

A PEEP AT THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

"When God was making the world He carried all the mountains in a great sack, and placed them here and there as He thought best. While passing over Montenegro He halted, in order to make a gift of a mountain to the country, when by great misfortune the sack burst, and the mountains, rocks, and stones came tumbling down pell-mell on to poor Montenegro, where to this day they form a bewildering mass."

So runs the popular legend, which has grown up in the land to account for the existence of that great assemblage of bleak and rugged mountains that constitute the Montenegrin Kingdom and the endeared home of a warrior race. We in England can scarcely realise how vastly different from our own lives are those of the simple folk who live in this mountain-girt and rock-strewn territory, which, though really of less size than Wales, yet possesses war-annals that brilliantly and daringly surpass those of the entire world.

A Peep at Montenegro

First, you must understand where Montenegro is. If you examine a map of Southern Europe you will notice Italy, that, jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea, somewhat resembles a badly-formed leg. Opposite the "heel" of Italy, and across the Adriatic, lies Turkey-in-Europe; and where Turkey greets Bosnia there is a small irregular patch, probably of different colour from the rest of the map, that is Montenegro, surrounded upon all sides by powerful enemies.

Most of us know the history of Robin Hood and his Merry Men, how they were outlawed by the powerful Barons, who, in the Lion-Heart's absence, took upon themselves to oppress the weak, and how desperately hard but in vain these feudal lords tried to kill brave Robin and his sturdy band. Montenegro, to speak figuratively, is the Robin Hood of Europe, a dauntless champion of liberty that, with Freedom's clarion-cry ever on the lips, has for hundreds of years stood facing fearful odds, fearless of men, fearing God alone. Meanwhile her valiant sons, with all the fierceness of their nature, have fought for their very lives, the might of the most powerful armies in the world failing to quench their matchless courage, or to break down their unwearied defence.

Montenegro is hemmed in by Albania (Turkey), Novi Pazar (Turkey), Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia; some of these are hard names to remember, but then this is a hard land, inhabited by a hardy people. Only a very little of Montenegro fringes the sea, for both Turkey and Austria are extremely jealous of this

tiny kingdom, and, if they could, they would shut her in altogether.

Imagine, if you can, a land consisting almost entirely of naked rock, of enormous waves of jagged mountains stretching as far as eye can reach, and composed of grey limestone, here and there broken by vast valleys that look for all the world like the craters of extinct volcanoes.

We gaze as though upon a dead world, for the glaring sunlight, pouring relentlessly down and with overwhelming force, reveals only a stricken desert. In this panorama of indescribable vistas the mountain barriers extend, fold upon fold and crest upon crest, until in appearance they sink in the embrace of cruel and savage Albania, while to the stranger, one who for the first time views their wild and unsurpassable grandeur, the idea uppermost in his mind is that Nature has here striven to portray in stone Commotion and Chaos linked.

On the occasion of my first ride through Montenegro I could scarcely believe that people existed amid such desolation. Slowly our horses picked their toilsome way, following a rugged path that pursues its perilous course among the towering pinnacles of grey rock, and skirts precipices where a hasty movement or a false step would mean certain death and destruction.

My companion was a Montenegrin gentleman who, with true courtesy and the chivalry of his race, had volunteered to act as guide. He wore the native dress, the most gorgeous and picturesque in the world. It consists of a coat of fine, sky-blue cloth, hanging from

shoulder to knee, open at the front to display a handsome red waistcoat heavily embroidered with gold braid, with baggy blue trousers to the knees, and high riding-boots of Russian leather. Encircling the waist is a rich silk scarf of considerable value, in which is stuck a businesslike-looking revolver, loaded in every chamber. Upon the head is worn the "Kara," or small round Montenegrin hat embroidered with symbolic designs.

Carefully we wended our way, and, if not my companion, certainly I was impressed by the solemn stillness that broods over this mountainous waste. As far as eye could scan there was no sign whatever of human habitation; the ground, too, was one confused mass of gaping fissures of the ever-monotonous grey rock, not a particle of water nor even trace of moisture, neither earth nor soil; just here and there green bushes that cast a welcome shade, yet that grew out of the very rock itself.

My companion informed me that we were approaching a small hamlet boasting only of four houses, yet although following the direction of his hand I strained my eyes in vain. Nothing but bleak, bare rocks did these mountains appear to be; then, as if by magic, four cottages seemed to spring into existence.

Vastly amazed, I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming. I could have positively sworn they were not there a moment before, and now they stood out distinctly and but a short distance away. Presently I understood the explanation for all this. The cottages are built of the same rock as their surroundings, and just as the

stripes on a tiger or the spots on a leopard hide their owner's presence among jungle grass and shrub, so do these stone huts at comparatively a short distance become merged in their surroundings.

As we neared the first cottage, for it was little more, being merely one storey high and roofed with slabs of grey stone, the door swung open, and a magnificent figure of a man appeared, bearing a tray upon which a bottle jingled against two thick glasses. The man was dressed in similar fashion to my companion, save, being poor, his clothes were of coarser material although of equally brilliant colours. In his belt was stuck the ever-present revolver, together with a silver-handled knife. His hair was snow-white, and his moustache reached almost to his chest, forming a strong contrast with his weather-beaten face, tanned to a dull brown by long exposure. Though over sixty years of age he stood as stiff and straight as a ramrod, and his walk had in it the spring of lusty youth.

His height was close upon six feet four inches, a giant we would think him at home here; but then in Montenegro you never meet a man under six-foot, while men of six-foot seven and eight inches are by no means uncommon.

At that moment the warrior was joined by his son, who topped his sire by a full inch, and as I looked at them both I thought I had never seen a finer pair of men—yet they were only typical examples of their countrymen.

The refreshment that was offered was for myself, for

in their simple creed a stranger to the land is a guest to be honoured and feasted, to be made free of their houses, given the best bed, and the last crust or drop of water. To such an extent is this hospitality carried that, in the event of a sudden attack by the Turks, every man in the village will, if the necessity arise, freely give his life in defence of his guests.

We drank a little "Schnapps," or white brandy, that coursed down my throat like liquid fire, causing tears of agony to run over my cheeks. I was more careful afterwards, for these warriors seem to possess throats of tanned leather, and could probably drink vitriol without turning a hair.

Both in appearance and speech our host comported himself like a country gentleman, and it was hard to realise that he and his people were upon the verge of starvation. In the dark shadows of the cottages we could discern the retiring figures of the women, for women in Montenegro do not mix upon equal terms with their men-folk. I gazed around to discover the means by which this tiny community kept themselves alive, and perceived that a hollow had been scooped out of the rock and filled with soil. My companion told me afterwards that each bucketful of earth had been carried many weary miles.

A few stalks of indian corn provided the necessary nourishment, while half-a-dozen unhappy-looking goats nibbled any straggling blades of grass that had succeeded in rising above ground.

Poverty in Montenegro is no disgrace, since from the

King downward all are poor. Money and position count for little; honour and bravery are alone esteemed: provided a man be a hero naught else matters; and, as I confidently hope to prove to you later on, Montenegro can incontestably claim that she has reared a spartan race of men that are indeed true heroes, comparable in all points with the paladins of old.

We bade good-bye to our hospitable hosts, and resumed our journey into the wilderness; turning in my saddle I looked back. The houses had vanished, absorbed by their bleak surroundings; only the brilliant blue and green coats of our friends radiated in the sunshine. I saw the elder man raise his right arm, and two puffs of smoke spurted forth, followed the next moment by the sound of the shots. My companion and I pulled out our revolvers, and returned the salute.

It was merely the Montenegrin way of bidding good-bye, and of speeding the parting guest.

CHAPTER II

"THE MAKING OF A NATION"

To understand and appreciate Montenegro, its people and their lives, you must know something of the History of the Land; when I say history, please do not imagine for a moment that I mean dry, dusty history, together with dates and difficult names, that we all learn at school. There is no need for reference to a single date in Montenegro's history, since that history is already a peerless record of ancestral warriory, of heroic deeds, of centuries of fighting, of holocausts of slain, prodigally devoted in defence of freedom, home, and faith.

The following epitome of history cannot but stir the heart of every British boy and girl for the very spirit of patriotism, with contempt for overwhelming odds, that breathes throughout its emblazoned pages.

At the time William of Normandy landed upon the Sussex Coast the Montenegro of to-day was inhabited by only some twenty thousand people, scattered throughout the mountainous region that lies between the Adriatic Sea and the great Lake of Scutari. The most powerful nation in that part of the world then was that of the Turks, who, desiring further conquests, of adding

SUNRISE : MISTS LIFTING FROM THE NAKED "KARST." *Page 3.*

fresh laurels to fame, and of incorporating further territory with their already great Empire, poured out of Asia in countless hordes, and took by storm the City of Constantine—Constantinople—which commands the important outlet of the Black Sea.

Not content with their triumphs, the followers of Mohammed set about the gigantic task of conquering Europe. These Turks were a brave people who spent their lives in fighting, and it was with high hopes of success that they commenced their perilous attempt.

Onward the Warriors of the Crescent surged in great waves, sweeping all before them, and what to-day are Albania, Bulgaria, Roumania and Servia succumbed before those fierce onslaughts. Arriving at the country of the Black Mountain, and feeling confident that no people, however great or powerful, let alone a few mountaineers, could stand against them, they sent an enormous army into Montenegro.

The Children of the "Crnagora"—which is the native name for the Black Mountain—forsook the fertile valleys and rich pastures bordering upon the Lake of Scutari and, retreating into the mountain fastnesses, founded their capital upon the plain of Cetinje, a small level area, as high up as the top of Snowdon, and protected by a grim circle of jagged mountain-peaks.

The only way to reach Cetinje is by a steep, rocky valley which climbs from the Lake into the naked fastnesses. Up this valley the Turks marched, but behind every rock stood a Montenegrin ready to shed his blood in defence of hearth and home. Charge after charge

the Turks made, fighting, slaying, and dying, but never succeeding in carrying the valley. Regiment after regiment attacked, and though the Montenegrins suffered terribly, they unfailingly hurled back their inveterate and deadly foes.

Then said the all-powerful Sultan:

"Shall this tiny people stay the might of Islâm? Send a greater and still greater army, until by sheer weight of numbers our feet stamp their mountains flat."

So the Sultan dispatched his bravest troops under the command of skilled and trusted Pashas. The armed host of Turks, almost as terrifying as a devouring horde of locusts, and with the martial intrepidity for which their race is noted, stormed the valley, and though the Montenegrins thus assailed fought with the fiercest courage it was impossible for them to arrest the advance. For every warrior that Montenegro had, Turkey brought up a hundred; moreover, the weapons and armour of the Moslem host were vastly superior to those of the Christians. For days this unexampled battle raged, the Montenegrins dying where they stood, in many cases their wives fighting on until they, too, were killed. Slowly yet inevitably the brave mountaineers were driven upward, contesting every foot of the steep mountain-sides; then, at last, the Turks burst, as a river does its banks, into the little Valley of Cetinje, compelling the surviving Montenegrins to take refuge among the crags and crevices of their mountain stronghold.

Continuing their advance, the Moslems with fire and

sword ravaged Cetinje, destroying the houses of the Montenegrins and trampling underfoot the standing crops. From the surrounding hills the survivors of these awful tragedies watched this wanton destruction of their hearths and homes, their churches razed to the ground, and the sacred images and crosses flung headlong down and broken to pieces. Deliberately and stealthily, though their hearts raged with the deadliest hatred, the surviving Montenegrins assembled in the steep valley through which the marauding Turks were compelled to pass in order to return to the Lake. History records—and it is a record that merits being emblazoned in golden characters—that not a single Moslem reached the plains alive.

The Sultan had indeed succeeded in invading Montenegro, but at such frightful cost, and with so unexpected a result; while the Black Mountain still remained the unshaken stronghold of Montenegrin freedom and defiance.

Meanwhile, undeterred by the drawbacks and disasters that followed in the wake of the Moslem scourge, the tried and matchless remnant of the Montenegrin nation took counsel with their hereditary Vladika or Prince. Undeservedly they were starving, their churches had been impiously sacked and were in ruins, their homes devastated, and their once fertile lands had become a desert. Moreover, they had suffered enormous losses, and considerably more than one-half of the Montenegrin army had been killed, while the remainder were more or less severely wounded.

The Sultan, ever an admirer of high courage and spirited defence, sent an embassy to the people of Montenegro, offering them peace and a large area of fertile land bordering the Lake, together with a Turkish title for their Prince, upon condition that they would acknowledge themselves his subjects. The Prince's answer was worthy of his race.

"So long as my people defend me," said he, "I need no Turkish title; if they desert me, such title will avail me little."

In other words, the Montenegrins preferred to starve for freedom's sake rather than to grow fat as favoured slaves.

Being for the moment unable to subdue these mountain warriors in consequence of their unparalleled defence, the Turks determined to leave them alone for a while, and by avoiding Montenegrin territory still to continue their great advance into Europe. At this time the Christian Kingdoms were too busy quarrelling among themselves to take heed of the danger threatening from the East, but when Bosnia and Herzegovina fell, and the powerful Hungarian capital of Buda surrendered after the battle of Mohacs, even warlike kings and intriguing priests found the existence of Christendom itself threatened, and the Pope made a fervent appeal to all of them to forget their private quarrels and combine together against their common foe the Turk.

Though Montenegro had been engulfed by the ceaseless waves of predatory Turks, surrounded yet never

overwhelmed, you may imagine how angry successive Sultans were to think that though they ruled over the greatest and most powerful empire in the world, yet in the middle of their own country a mere band of mountaineers still upheld the Cross, despite all Moslem efforts to drag it down.

Against brave, dauntless, spirited and defiant Montenegro army after army had been hurled; campaign after campaign had been conducted, until finally the entire area of this small, stony, mountain-girt valley had been literally soaked in blood, not once, but too terribly often for one to enumerate. The years rolled on, generation after generation of warriors fought and died, yet still did the fierce conflict rage. Prince succeeded Prince, and led his Montenegrins to the fray, and in the front rank of battle upheld the highest traditions of the race by his own personal bravery. Sultan after Sultan, too, dispatched armies against the miniature kingdom, but though these armed hosts inflicted terrible loss and slaughter, yet were one and all finally driven back down the fatal valley to the lake.

When the Turkish advance into Europe had been stopped by the united Christian Powers, and the conquest of Europe made impossible, a frontier line was drawn across the Continent to the north of Bosnia, and the Turks contented themselves with the huge slice of territory they had already acquired. There now begins the darkest period in the stormy annals of Montenegro, for, relieved from the strain of her great wars with the Powers, Turkey was enabled to devote her immense

resources towards the long reckoning with the Warriors of the Black Mountain.

Conceive, if you can, what fate threatened Montenegro! Turkey at peace with the world meant Turkey warring against Montenegro, an Elephant attacking a Flea. For the Montenegrins, barely a few thousands strong, with but little ammunition, and no means of getting further supplies, it seemed a foregone conclusion till at the last moment came a renewed offer of peace from the Sultan. He offered generous terms, peace and security, even friendship, in return for an acknowledgment of suzerainty.

The reigning Prince of Montenegro hastily summoned a council of his people; it should be for them to decide between serfdom on the one hand and untrammelled liberty on the other. With one voice the Children of the Karst gave their answer.

"If die we must, then let us die for freedom; freedom for our faith, for our homes, for our children's children."

Montenegro had little preparation to make, for she was always ready for war, but as her people gazed down the rocky valley it seemed as if all Turkey were marching against them. No small expedition was this, but the powerful army of a Great Empire, in whose van marched the flower of the Ottoman soldiery, each man a picked and seasoned warrior, for it was certain death to be first in that fatal valley.

Now come the final stages in the defence of a brave nation, the last fearful fight for very existence, not only for the men of the Black Mountain, but for their women-

folk as well. Boys fought sturdily by their father's side, whilst their sisters helped to load the guns. Regiment after regiment of their inveterate foe was sent forward, with the only result that innumerable thousands of bodies lay mangled and crushed beneath the boulders and rocks that had been rained on them from the steep and precipitous sides of the Black Mountain. Still did these Turkish assailants persevere and fight on, proving to the very last their courage, and by sheer numbers alone driving back the Montenegrins, who, dauntless and fierce, died to commemorate the warriory of their race.

Yet once again did the Moslems reach Cetinje, raiding, slaying, burning and razing to the ground all that was habitable in that embosomed valley, but paying only too dearly in the end for their momentary triumph.

With Tennyson let us say:

They rose to where their sov'ran eagle sails,
  They kept their faith, their freedom on the height,
  Chaste, frugal, savage, armed by day and night
Against the Turk; whose inroad nowhere scales
Their headlong passes, but his footstep fails,
  And red with blood the Crescent reels from fight
  Before their dauntless hundreds in prone flight
By thousands down the crags and through the vales.

It may be well to mention here as an instance of Montenegrin initiative and resource that often had they neither powder nor bullets, yet with dogged courage refused to give in, so they slew their enemies with the

sword, and took all the necessary powder and bullets from their bodies. For full five hundred years did this little band of Montenegrin warriors sustain the unequal fight, and, though at their last gasp, refuse time after time to become allies of the unspeakable Turks.

How many countries can boast of such a history, or what peoples of such ancestors?

Between the wars with the Turks Montenegro had often Christian enemies to face: when Napoleon Buonaparte, first Emperor of the French, was sweeping almost irresistibly as conqueror over the face of Europe, only two countries were able successfully to withstand him. One, as you know, was our own land, the other was—Montenegro. Even little Montenegro did not hesitate to defy the Great Napoleon. So enraged was the Emperor when his army was repulsed that in his anger he threatened to turn Montenegro (The Black Mountain) into Monte*rosso* (The Red Mountain), meaning that he would do so with her people's blood; but, like most people who say things in a rage, he subsequently found himself unable to carry out his threat, and, as the Americans say, "having bitten off more than he could chew," he was forced to march away, just as the Sultan himself had had to do.

Until about thirty years ago Montenegro was continually at war with Turkey, unrecognised as a nation by the Great Powers of Europe, but, as it was impossible for these same Powers any longer to overlook her centuries of heroic struggles, they in the year 1876 formally recognised Montenegro as a country, and

NJEGUSI. BIRTHPLACE OF KING NIKOLAS. *Page 21.*
(Note the road winding its way over the naked "Karst.")

acknowledged her ruler as a King. Her frontiers were strictly defined, and two seaports were bestowed upon her; Turkey being forbidden to attack her small neighbour without just cause.

In this rough and terrible way was the Montenegrin Nation made, and now you will cease to wonder why to-day the people carry loaded firearms and, walking with the proud step of a conqueror, look you fearlessly in the eyes. *Jus gladii* (By Right of the Sword) is the Nation's motto, since the land has been won, and is still held, by might of arms alone.

CHAPTER III

"THE SMALLEST CAPITAL IN EUROPE"

ALTHOUGH Montenegro possesses two seaports of her own, the traveller to Cetinje does not make use of either of them, on account of their distance from the Capital; he journeys instead to Cattaro, the Austrian seaport at the foot of the Black Mountain. Here there is a wonderful harbour formed by Nature, called the Bocche di Cattaro, and absolutely landlocked save for a narrow outlet into the Adriatic. Three great bays, strongly resembling lakes, spread themselves out in the radial manner of a star-fish, and by way of further likeness they have often been compared with the Fiords of Norway or, in a lesser degree, the Lochs of Scotland.

As the steamer sails up the Bocche di Cattaro the traveller catches his first glimpse of Montenegro, which rises precipitously almost from the water's edge, and forms a great barrier or jagged tableland some five thousand feet in height. Austria's most southerly province, called Dalmatia, extends here in a tiny strip of territory barely half-a-mile broad, but effectually separating Montenegro from the sea. Cattaro lies at the extremity of the farthest landlocked bay, and so near is the giant Black Mountain that the town can

scarcely find room, the little white houses looking as though some Eastern Genii had in joke picked them all up and thrown them hard against the towering mountain, that while some houses had tumbled back to the water's edge, the remainder had stuck fast to where they were hurled, seemingly climbing, and clinging as by a miracle to the precipitous rock-face.

As the steamer makes its way slowly to the quay, the traveller has pointed out to him what looks like a long, irregular, white scratch on the mountain-side, which zigzags backwards and forwards above the town, somewhat resembling a piece of cotton thrown carelessly upon a dark cushion. It is "The Giant Staircase," the only portal by which one may enter Montenegro, and what from below looks simply like a narrow streak is in reality a fine carriage road built in the face of the precipice by dint of marvellous skill and years of unflagging labour.

Cattaro itself is exceptionally full of interest, possessing as it does narrow Italian streets, and a beautiful old-world harbour. To this hive of civilisation come a crowd of Montenegrin peasants, bringing their heavy baskets of market produce down the long zigzags of "The Staircase." But some look terribly ill-at-ease, for the men's hands are for ever clutching at their empty belts. The Austrian Government wisely compels them to leave their rifles and revolvers at home, or at any rate at the frontier.

It is as well here to state clearly that there is no

love lost between Austria and Montenegro, but I certainly do not intend to discuss Balkan politics at present.

The panoramic drive up into the heart of The Black Mountain is a glorious and entrancing memory, giving the traveller the vivid impression that he is in some rising balloon or airship, for, as he proceeds on his way, the road climbs higher and higher, winding this way and that, taking advantage of every irregularity in the precipice face, yet always ascending, seemingly without end. Now and then the traveller, if he is so minded, may drop a stone over the road's edge—that stone will probably fall upon the self-same road a thousand feet beneath. Looking down from the top of the ascent, the serpentine turns seen beneath closely resemble the rungs of a ladder raised against the mountain-side.

Presently to our view the still waters of the Bocche are reinforced by the other two arms, and beyond them for glorious vista to the horizon lies the great, blue, glittering expanse of the Adriatic Sea. Four thousand five hundred feet above the sea the traveller takes his last look upon Cattaro at his feet, and the ocean beyond, and, rounding a turn in the road, he enters the rock-strewn Kingdom of Montenegro. At once the scene is changed, a perfect wilderness of rock, crag, and boulder confronts him, and he gathers his first vivid and lasting impression of the "Crnagora." Upon the much frequented high road to Cetinje the traveller can gain no adequate conception of the true life of the

people, and therefore we need not linger any further on this our journey to the Capital.

However, there is one place of exceptional interest, Njuguši, for it was here that King Nikolas was born in a very unpretentious dwelling, and we pass it as we quit this small village of low, stone-built houses.

Again, a further climb through the same bleak, grey rocks, and after a while the road descends towards a little plain, hemmed in by eternal mountain-peaks, and looking not unlike the interior of some Brobdingnagian egg-cup. At the far end of this miniature plain nestles a cluster of houses—we have reached Cetinje, the smallest Capital in the world.

Apart from stirring historical memories, it cannot be said that there is much of spectacular interest to be found in Cetinje. There are no imposing buildings as in Belgrade, or Sofia, no theatres, no crowded streets, neither electric trams nor trains, nor, indeed, any traffic as we understand the word. Cetinje is virtually a big village somewhat resembling a South African "township," consisting of a broad street lined with low, two-storeyed houses, and a large market-square. Everything is of the simplest kind, almost primitive, and the King's Palace is only dignified by that name on account of its really being the largest house; and the daily life of the Royal Family is as simple, open, and unaffected as that of the poorest peasant.

What strikes the stranger the most is the motley assortment of coloured garments donned by the people. The first impression is that some special fête is being

held, and it is only after a sojourn of a week or so in the land that we begin to realise this almost prodigal phase of brilliance is but one among many distinguishing features in the ordinary life of this interesting little people. Although the Montenegrin nation is the reverse of wealthy, not far removed from poverty in fact, yet from three to forty pounds are paid ungrudgingly for a national costume; and this inordinate love of finery, coupled with a passion for gambling, alas! serve to keep this chivalrous nation poor.

The men wear a long coat, shaped in at the waist, and with the skirt reaching to the knees, made of fine cloth, coloured either light blue, green, or red, and open at the front. The waistcoat is of scarlet cloth, and heavily embroidered with gold thread. Round the waist there is a silk sash, through which is thrust a revolver. Covering the legs, the poorer classes wear tight, white felt leggings; those who can afford it have adopted high Russian boots of soft, black leather. The little round hat I referred to in the first chapter is worn by everyone. Its crown is of red cloth, to signify the blood shed upon the grey rocks, and on it are embroidered five gold circles, each symbolically representing a hundred years of fighting. In the centre are the letters H.I. "ΗΝΚΟΑΑ.Ι." the Greek form of Nikolas I. The outside band of the cap is black, in memory of a great battle fought long ago, at the time Turkey first conquered the Balkan Kingdoms. The women are dressed just as brilliantly, wearing long coats and sashes like those of the men. When you think of a whole country

dressed in such an extraordinary fashion, it is very easy to imagine the everyday, gay appearance of the public streets.

Unfortunately, there are very few ancient monuments in Montenegro, since the continual inroads of the Turks effectually destroyed all traces of many that must have formerly existed. In Cetinje the oldest building is the Monastery, which is perched against the grey rocks, and above it stands the "Kula," or stone tower, that used to be surmounted with iron spikes, each of them garnished with a newly-severed Turkish head. Many people in Cetinje can remember the last occasion when they bore their ghastly burdens. In the Monastery, the hereditary burying-place of the Kings, lives the Vladika, or Archbishop, of the Black Mountain. Any morning at daybreak one may see King Nikolas worshipping at the tombs of his ancestors, for the King is an early riser, and has generally put in a hard day's work long before most people at home are ready for breakfast.

In front of the Monastery a number of heavy Turkish cannon are placed in rows, the spoil of the last campaign, and the sight of them affords great satisfaction to the inhabitants.

In the large, open market-square, always a prominent feature in Montenegrin towns, the sun blazes down with insufferable power, and the peasants are only too glad to take advantage of the welcome shelter that the few leafy trees afford them. Until the traveller has grown accustomed to the brilliant native dresses he is

ever imagining himself transported to some medieval town whose inhabitants are parading in all the glory of ancestral, barbaric adornment.

Even the houses of the different Government Ministers are but tiny two-storeyed buildings, and it is very strange to see the emblazoned coats-of-arms over the narrow doors of these unpretentious dwellings.

In the post office the man who sells stamps or takes your telegram is dressed in the same gorgeous fashion, with revolver stuck prominently in belt. This habit of carrying firearms is general throughout the land, and one of the most dreaded punishments for a man is to be deprived of his weapons for any period whatever. Towards the Albanian frontier we shall find that in addition to the revolver, a rifle, knife, and "handjar" (long heavy sword) are carried, together with plenty of ammunition.

"A man without firearms is a man without freedom" and "Thou may as well take away my brother as my rifle" are two well-known maxims.

The King will often stop a man in the street and demand an inspection of his weapons, and if by any chance they are found to be dirty or unloaded, the punishment is extremely severe, for King Nikolas is adamant upon this point, and rightly so.

As the supreme head of a fighting nation, and the descendant of a long line of warrior kings, it is hardly surprising that King Nikolas should look every inch a leader of men. He is both tall—the prevailing feature of the national physique—and broad-shouldered, and

IN THE MARKET PLACE, CETINJE. *Page 23.*

despite his seventy-two years his back is as straight, and his movements as strong and vigorous, as a young man's.

Coming to the throne at the age of twenty, the King has seen his country advance from comparative obscurity to its present honourable position among the nations. For over a score of years he waged fierce battle with the Turks, leading his men in the thick of the fight, proving his ability as a general, and by a hundred brave deeds his personal courage. In times of peace, too, he has striven really hard for his beloved country, both diplomatically with the Powers of Europe and in personal organisation of the scant resources of the little kingdom. He is to-day a crack shot with rifle and pistol, as he is also a past-master in the leadership of men. One foreign minister remarked jokingly that not a bird's nest could fall in Montenegro without the King issuing an order for its reinstatement.

It is said that King Nikolas knows each of his subjects by name, and certainly all look upon him, their "Gospodar," with passionate esteem and reverence. The humblest peasant may freely obtain an audience and recount to his Sovereign any wrong he may have suffered, happy in the conviction that it will be righted, and I have often watched with the keenest pleasure King Nikolas holding his informal morning Court upon the steps of his unpretentious Palace, his sturdy and imposing figure, clad in the national dress, seated, and surrounded by a few officials, the steps lined by his "*Perianiks*," the name given to his picked bodyguard, on account of the feathers worn in their caps. With

the utmost speed the audiences take place, now and then a prisoner is led up, sentenced, and the next called. It is all so easy and so simple, for the King's word is law, and neither liar nor traitor could meet those steady eyes of his, that seem to pierce one through and through.

Up to quite recent times King Nikolas dispensed justice in this primitive way, until cases grew too numerous for his personal attention; he then instituted Courts of Justice, and appointed judges. It speaks volumes for the decisions of these Courts that even Mohammedans and Albanians from over the frontier bring their cases for trial before a Montenegrin judge, in preference to their own Moslem one. King Nikolas has a great veneration for England, and he was a special favourite of Queen Victoria, who personally decorated him.

As we ride through the land we shall find everywhere evidences of King Nikolas' genius, and the overwhelming respect and esteem in which he is held.

The Montenegrin army was founded fifteen years ago by King Nikolas to replace the volunteers. The regulations are simplicity itself. Every man between the ages of 16 and 60 is forced to serve. This service they render almost instinctively, and it is therefore scarcely surprising that compulsory service is extremely popular in Montenegro, and that under capable instructors the men quickly make splendid soldiers.

After four months' service they return with rifles to their homes, and are then, to ensure efficiency, subject to a weekly drill. In place of the long coats, to which

I have already referred, they wear red, short-sleeved jackets, and look thoroughly businesslike. There are few military distinctions, the different grades or ranks merely donning special badges upon the fronts of their little round caps. Russia has supplied them with up-to-date field-pieces and rifles, cavalry and heavy artillery being useless in mountainous Montenegro. From the same foreign source the country is also provided with much other valuable assistance. Russia renders all possible help to Montenegro, because they are both Slav nations, and belong to the same Greek Church. For the same reasons, however, Austria has persistently remained a sworn enemy of Montenegro. Behind Austria there really stands Germany, armed to the teeth, and behind Russia looms France. Thus you see that even petty quarrels between Montenegro and Turkey may quite possibly involve the Great Powers of Europe in a terrible and disastrous war. But then, as I have before remarked, I must not allow myself to become entangled in that vast maze of international complication known as European Politics.

There are two particularly fine buildings in Cetinje, the Russian and Austrian Embassies; and, too, the new Barracks are especially popular. There is a tiny theatre, open for a few weeks in the summer season, where King Nikolas' plays are produced, for the King is a famous poet, and has written many beautiful odes, besides having composed battle-songs for his various regiments. There is also a small but well-equipped hospital, and a high school for girls and boys. The climate in sum-

mer is excellent, though very hot, but for the eight months of winter it is terribly severe, and much snow then falls. Every other house seems to be a café, where the men congregate of an evening, and though they occasionally consume large quantities of spirits they never grow more than noisy. In the remoter parts of Montenegro a man will often fire off his revolver in the air, particularly if he is excited, by way of letting off steam, a practice rather disconcerting to any nervous-minded folk, but then you seldom find any nervous-minded folk in Montenegro, not even among the few visitors.

There are no shops as we know them; in fact there isn't a large piece of glass in the whole place. You simply walk through an open doorway into a small room, on the floor of which or on the walls are exposed the goods or merchandise, consisting of clothes, weapons, embroideries, shawls, scarves, etc., and the man who serves you carries his revolver fully loaded, and very probably towers above you quite six inches.

CHAPTER IV

A THOUSAND BATTLEFIELDS IN ONE

Leaving Cetinje, the one and only road climbs high above the red roofs of the tiny Capital, pursuing its sinuous and difficult course ever amid the same grey rocks. The highest point has been well-named "Bella Vista," since the view from this spot is truly one of the finest and most charming in Europe.

We are gazing down the fatal valley, in whose rugged embrace the Turks and Montenegrins have fought so many well-contested battles; a valley in which every boulder may be said to treasure the memory of some fierce and heroic struggle, and every pinnacle of rock to embody a tombstone. Upon either side of our way the jagged and riven mountains extend before our gaze in myriad fantastic and grotesque forms, and ever beyond them still more and more mountains. At the foot of the valley lies a glittering sheet of silver, radiant in the sunshine, the famed Lake of Scutari, that has for glorious background and vista the snow-white Alps of mountainous Albania, the home of a race accounted the most warlike of all the Sultan's numerous vassals. Wave after wave the seemingly interminable mountains rise and fall perspectively to the horizon, to one's imagi-

nation an enchanted and petrified sea, burdened with torn and gaping folds of storm-lashed crest. The road descends this marvellously steep valley in great curves and erratic windings, ever clinging to the precipice edge, and anon slanting directly downwards. Upon our left rises a solid wall of rock; on our right the nearest ground is fully a thousand feet below.

Now and then we meet a party of Montenegrins returning with springy step to their rock-sheltered homes, the men swinging along in front, followed by the women-folk leading the mules.

A thousand feet above Rjeka a small café is perched amid the rocks, and here we halt for a brief rest. The moment I entered the almost bare room a glass of white spirit and a cup of coffee were set before me; not having ordered either, I naturally desired an explanation. The man who waited upon me pointed to two warriors in the corner.

"They ordered it for you," he said, and grinned.

So it is all over this remarkably unique little land, where we meet with so much hospitality and consideration; a man may be upon the verge of bankruptcy, yet will he with his last cent insist on treating the stranger: there is no expectation of favours to come, all proceeds simply from the inborn hospitality of the people; sometimes they forget there is a limit to even a stranger's bodily capacity, beyond which he is unable to go, no matter how desirous he may be to please his host, and after having once or twice been reduced to this painful state, I was continually upon the watch for misplaced

generosity, and always insisted upon ordering drinks all round, careful to do so several times until I could with decency slip away.

Every warrior we meet looks fearlessly into our eyes. "My country is yours, ask what you will," his bearing signifies, and it is a current and true Montenegrin boast that wherever the stranger finds himself, be there a house near, he has only to knock at the door to discover—home.

Rjeka is a busy little village upon the Lake of Scutari, or rather upon a broad river communicating with the lake. A small steamer calls every day, thus bestowing upon the place the dignity of a port. The houses are one-storeyed, for in Montenegro a man who owns a house with a floor above the doorway, and also possesses £50 a year, is considered a very wealthy person indeed.

The fronts or façades of the houses are coloured red, blue, and green, and all this chromatic effect gives the village an unusually gay and lively appearance. Under the trees by the harbour the men, like Solomon in all his glory, parade, and in the tiny shops one can buy powder and bullets as easily as one can sweets at home. The King has a house here, and half-a-mile away the broad river disappears entirely into a vast cavern in the mountains.

Many of the rivers of Montenegro and The Herzegovina behave like this one. They gush out from some cave and turn a dried-up valley into a veritable Garden of Eden, where figs, pomegranates, peaches, grapes, and indian corn grow in profusion; then the flowing river

suddenly disappears into another great cave, and the country again becomes parched and barren. No one knows where these mysterious rivers come from, or where they go to; sometimes they reappear fifty miles away, often they disappear and are lost for ever.

One river I visited in The Herzegovina has a curious history or series of incidents attached to it, illustrating the peculiarity already alluded to of these underground streams. One morning an old Turk was sitting upon the rocks watching the rushing water appearing from the mountain cavern, when he was astonished to see a shepherd's crook floating by, and more surprised still to recognise it as the one he had given his son a year ago. Now, this man's son was a shepherd employed upon the mountains twenty miles away, and the father at once dispatched a messenger to bring him home.

Being a dishonest pair of rascals, they hit upon an ingenious plan, which was for the young man to kill one of his master's sheep every third day, and to throw its body into the stream in which his staff had been lost. The scheme succeeded admirably. Every third day the young man slew a nice fat sheep, and in due course the father recovered its body twenty miles away. All went well until the owner of the flock, noticing to his great surprise that his sheep were disappearing in a remarkably mysterious manner, determined to find out the cause, and therefore ordered a strict watch to be kept upon his shepherd. Two days later the old Turk, waiting eagerly by the cavern's mouth, was horror-stricken to see, in place of the dead sheep he had ex-

EVER READY: WEEKLY DRILL AND INSPECTION OF WEAPONS. *Page 20.*

pected, the headless body of his murdered son : so overcome was the old man at the terrible sight that he lost his footing, and falling into the river was instantly whirled away and drowned.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS ALBANIA

From Rjeka to Podgorica is a desolate and somewhat wearisome journey over the same grey, bleak rocks, but here and there with fine views disclosed of the river-coursed valley to the lake. However, the time soon passed, as we chatted with our guide, who told plenty of tales of wild adventures upon the frontier, the cream of which later on I must recount.

The Vendetta is still one of the most cherished and deadly customs of the Montenegrins. The word "vendetta" is, as you doubtless know, an Italian one, meaning vengeance, and it signifies the revenge taken, instead of allowing the law to deal out justice, by private individuals upon any who have wronged them.

Before social order was established in the world, when each man lived as he thought fit, and did as best he could, quarrels, family or otherwise, were settled upon the spot. Two men at enmity would fight; if one were

killed, his nearest male relative challenged the victor, and so on, until the single quarrel had involved a host of innocent persons. When Law and Justice came upon the scene, those in authority instituted Courts where disputes could be settled, each side agreeing to accept the verdict, thus avoiding the wholesale sacrifice of lives.

To-day, if a man consider himself an aggrieved or injured party, he goes to law, and the State, in due course, punishes the guilty individual. In Montenegro the case is different. Although the State has built prisons, and instituted Courts of Justice, the people still prefer to settle their quarrels as of yore; centuries of fighting have moulded their character and given rise to certain beliefs, the principal one of which is that, if a man does not personally resent and avenge an insult, he is a coward. I will relate a typical case I heard of, and you will then understand how terrible a custom the Vendetta really is.

A certain man, whom I will call A, possessed two remarkably fine cows, of which he was naturally very proud. One day the finer beast of the two strayed upon a piece of land belonging to this man's neighbour B, who drove it roughly away. The owner of the cow happened to witness this treatment, and angry words followed. Tempers are quickly roused in Montenegro, and perhaps before he quite realised his deed A had pulled out his revolver and fatally wounded his neighbour B. The dead man's son, fifteen years of age, took his father's gun and lay in wait for B's slayer, shooting him through the heart, and at the same time wounding

A's brother. Although mortally stricken, A's brother managed to kill the boy, and so a vendetta started.

Now, B had a brother in a village twenty miles away, in which, as it happened, there lived a family of A's cousins. The brother thereupon took his rifle and, going out into the fields, shot down two of A's cousins, who were working at the crops, before their relatives in turn dispatched him.

As all these people had relations, and as the trouble was in danger of extending like wild-fire, King Nikolas, acting with his usual promptitude, ordered every member of the two families to be brought to him in chains. The King's wonderful personality finally settled the blood feud, the nearest male relatives standing upon the shore and throwing stones into the lake to the number of the dead. King Nikolas does all in his power to stamp out the vendetta, and his uncle, the last Prince, took such strict measures as almost to make himself unpopular.

A remarkable trait in the Montenegrin character is that of absolute honesty. To be called a thief is the greatest insult that can be inflicted. It is no exaggeration to quote the strict law, and that is, that if a man drop his purse filled with gold pieces, the first person passing will place it upon a boulder at the road-side, so that the loser has only to retrace his steps in order to recover his property. Theft is considered as terrible a sin as cowardice. If a Montenegrin found his only son a coward, he would not hesitate to shoot him, so that a Montenegrin boy will tell you seriously that he is

a "hero," and although he may have done nothing yet to merit such a title, he regards it as a proud heritage descended through a long line of warrior ancestors, and, should the necessity ever arise, knows that he will certainly not disgrace the title.

Boys in Montenegro are soldiers from the time they can walk, and they stand straight and firm, saluting the stranger with military precision as though, to say the very least, they were Napoleon's Old Guard. The chief reason for their instinctive military bearing is that, as Turkey conquered the surrounding countries, those members of the ancient fighting aristocracies who refused to acknowledge Moslem rule left their homes and settled chiefly in Montenegro, so that to-day her people are descended from really the noblest blood throughout the Balkans.

When boys quarrel in Montenegro, one will shout to another with infinite scorn :

"Thou a hero indeed, thou whose grandfather died in his bed! "

Terrible is this taunt, and the other boy has perforce to turn away in shame, inwardly and darkly vowing that at the first opportunity he will clear the family honour.

Considering the remarkable stature and strength of the men, the quantity of their daily food is incredibly meagre. At daybreak they breakfast on a piece of heavy maize bread, and take absolutely nothing more until sunset, when they eat more bread, this time with a little milk. They seldom eat meat, except at a feast, for they cannot afford such luxury. Upon this scant diet they

are able to make wonderful journeys—showing the stamina of the race—climbing almost inaccessible mountains, and traversing paths at giddy heights, where seemingly only mountain goats would find footing; and they will maintain this most arduous travelling for hour after hour without the least sign of fatigue.

The road we are now traversing leaves the monotonous grey expanse of rocks, and there stretches before us the great Valley of Zeta, beyond which rise the mountains of Albania, at whose foot lies Podgorica. This is altogether a new part of Montenegro, given her by the Powers, and its richness and fertility of soil have brought much wealth to the little kingdom.

Not far from Podgorica we come upon the river Moraca, whose swift current and treacherous eddies have scooped a deep bed down through the massive rocks. Many lives have been lost from time to time in the black pools; and with the river in full flood no living thing can possibly exist once it is caught by the angry, swirling waters.

A very fine old stone bridge that spans the chasm was built, so the story goes, by a Turkish Vizier. Many stirring episodes and fierce fights have taken place upon this self-same bridge, and not so very long ago, for that matter.

There are two high stone piers close to the town, and some forty yards apart; they have been so placed to commemorate a singular occurrence. In the thick of one particular battle a Turk succeeded with one terrific sweep of his arm in cutting off the head of a

Montenegrin; to the horror of all the combatants, the headless body of the Montenegrin warrior ran forty paces before it dropped to the ground.

Podgorica, meaning "at the bottom of the hill," is the leading commercial town of Montenegro. Were it not so open to attack from Albania, it might have been the Capital, for all the important business is carried on within its white walls.

Albania is the name given to the country which here joins Montenegro, and although it is actually part of Turkey, yet the Sultan has little real power over the people, who are half-Mohammedan, half-Catholic-Christian. The Albanians have always proved a sharp thorn in the side of Turkey, for they live in walled villages high up in the mountains, and are continually at war with the neighbouring Montenegrins. The two races are at daggers drawn. Time after time the Sultan has tried to disarm these Albanians, but as yet without the slightest avail.

The Albanians being Catholics, and the Montenegrins adherents of the Greek Church, causes them to be the bitterest of enemies. One would imagine that these two Christian peoples, surrounded as they are by Moslems, would be firm allies, but we must remember the bitter strife that existed at one time in our own kingdom between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Unfortunately, the Montenegrin-Albanian frontier is such that the line is often drawn through a man's back garden, so that to pick a potato he must actually trespass upon Albanian territory, and while an Albanian possesses

bullets he feels impelled and in duty bound to use them.

When we journey along this same frontier I shall have many stirring anecdotes to recount.

Both King Nikolas and the Turkish authorities are hard put to it to maintain peace. It is no uncommon thing for a Montenegrin shepherd deliberately to drive his flock on to the Albanian frontier for the sheer love of daring. Close by Podgorica is a strip of ground called "Crna Zemlja," meaning Black Earth. The two frontiers pass round it, making this plot a sort of no man's land. For the most part it is covered with long, pampas grass, and here the young men of Montenegro and Albania will deliberately resort, as we would to a cricket or football match, and stalk one another.

There is excellent cover, and two enemies will enthusiastically engage in this task until—crack goes a gun, and the victor returns home in triumph. It is said that every inch of this spot is soaked with blood : out of pure bravado a man will sling his gun upon his back, take his hand from his revolver, and humming a loud tune will actually court death by walking slowly across this strip of ground, knowing that at any moment a bullet from Albania may end his life.

Often a man goes to his death in this way, but his fate does not daunt others. Truly it is no exaggeration to say that these people have but one great fear, and that is—the chance of dying peacefully in their beds.

CHAPTER VI

PODGORICA

No one has really seen Montenegro unless he has made himself thoroughly conversant with the medley of strange life to be encountered in the market-place of Podgorica. Here are groups of fierce-looking Albanians dressed in their characteristic costume, tight, white trousers, heavily black-braided jacket, and white fez; slung round waist and shoulder is the leather bandolier filled with long cartridges, but every gun and revolver has been left at the frontier. They stand over their wares, bargaining possibly with the very men with whom, a mile out of the town, they will fight to the death: quite half of the gay figures are of Turkish nationality, for Podgorica was originally Turkish territory. Pretty little Moslem maidens, with bright-coloured, baggy trousers, and gaudy shawls, run hither and thither, their mothers being heavily veiled according to custom, and one never gets so much as a glimpse of their faces, since Turkish women only look upon the world through a narrow slit in their veil or "yashmak."

The Turks themselves are strange, wild-looking figures, with heads shaved save for a single tuft of coarse hair, and this is purposely left so that after death the

PODGORICA, UPON THE ALBANIAN FRONTIER. *Page 37.*

angels may have something substantial with which to drag the faithful up into Paradise. They wear red fezzes, from which hang enormous bright-blue silk tassels, long enough to reach to the shoulders. Their clothes are for the most part white, though the old men wear long, coloured coats.

Here and there are the rough farmers from the hills, dressed in their heavy cloaks of sheepskin, the long matted fleece turned outward. Here a band of gypsies with jet-black hair and dancing eyes rove round, their restless hands for ever fingering the handle of a familiar knife, conspicuous and forbidding in their belt. Now and again a madman runs shrieking through the throng, or a cripple exhibits some terrible deformity to the gaze of the charitable. Only the Montenegrins are armed, and they stroll through the crowd with proud step and haughty bearing.

The air is rent with a medley of strange tongues, as though one were among the very builders of The Tower of Babel. There two men losing their tempers feel for their revolvers; the Albanian has left his at the frontier; the Montenegrin is armed, but in his rage he does not forget the habits of a lifetime; the Albanian being unarmed is safe, for no Montenegrin fires upon an unarmed man or—woman. A few curt words and the disputants part. One might smile, were it not for the fact that outside the town these two men will, when they meet, fight to the death, and alas! their relatives after them. Among the seething, shambling crowd stride the tall figures of the Montenegrin police. There are

very few police in Montenegro, for they are rarely needed, save in suppressing the vendetta. The Montenegrin, though capable of consuming vast quantities of liquor, carries it with scarcely an effort, and does so peaceably, drunken brawls being practically unknown. When men do quarrel it becomes a serious business, and there is a quick exchange of shots. The Montenegrins are jovial companions, exceedingly hospitable, and ever ready to welcome a stranger in their midst.

The Montenegrin police, armed only with revolvers, exercise an effective and unassuming control over those congregating in the mixed market at Podgorica; they are cool and determined men, acting promptly yet quickly, for they live upon the edge of a human volcano, where passions at furnace heat may burst forth at any moment. The police force, like the army, have discarded long coats, and wear instead short, red jackets with sleeves, that give them a noticeably smart, business-like appearance. I need scarcely mention that there is not a man in the force under six feet one or two inches.

In the market are hundreds of wooden stalls groaning under their loads of tropical fruit, which can be bought for a mere nothing. Sugar melons, sweet and delicious, at a halfpenny apiece; peaches, plums, and magnificent grapes a penny a pound.

But the colour! the colour of it all, the gorgeous blues and greens, the yellows and blood-red scarlets; the babel of strange tongues, the roar of rough, harsh voices; overhead a cloudless sky of deepest blue, and

for background the purple vista of mountainous Albania.

Podgorica is strictly respected as neutral ground, and bitter enemies may therefore meet face to face in the market-place, but a lightning glance and a significant tapping of a revolver are sufficient evidence of a blood feud that will probably have sooner or later a fatal ending.

There are two distinct towns in Podgorica, divided by the lazy Ribnica. Thirty years ago the Montenegrins carried old Podgorica at the point of the sword, and after its fall the market was held in the grassy fields at the other side of the stream; consequently there sprang into existence a new town, to which all the business was transferred.

To-day, if you wander through the Turkish part, you will find it crumbling to decay; its streets are hilly and badly paved, and the massive old walls, that for centuries defended the town, are fissured in a thousand places, though bravely struggling against neglect. Many fierce encounters have taken place in the old citadel, the cruelty of the Moslems being quite equalled by that of the Montenegrins, and there are men in Podgorica to-day who, after an attack, have witnessed the victorious Montenegrins seated upon the ground counting the number of Turkish noses and heads that they had cut off during the fray.

I saw one Turk in the market-place who had thus lost his nose. It seems that during a sortie this man was stunned, and upon regaining consciousness found him-

self bleeding violently in the face; wonderful to relate he succeeded in crawling back to Podgorica, where after a time he recovered. To-day he is hale and hearty, and follows the occupation of baggage-carrier; he is a humorous personage, but, when he happens to smile, which is pretty often, the effect beggars description.

There are many instances upon the frontier of men who have recovered from similar mutilation. The savage atrocities of the Turks begot similar retaliations, and it has always been the custom of the Montenegrins to cut off the noses of their slain foes, since only by producing the nasal appendages in question could a man prove the truth of his boasts.

There are two mosques in old Podgorica, whose white minarets still point to Paradise, and summon the Faithful to prayer. The minaret is the name given to the slender tower attached to Moslem churches, and round the top it has a circular balcony, from which point of vantage the priests make their call to prayer five times each day. It is a piercing, long-drawn-out wail, ending in the final "*Allah-hu*," a cry which at daybreak and sunset seems to impart to the stillness of the air a weird and profound melancholy.

Although Turkish homes are to be found among this scene of desolation, the Turk is yet a big power in Podgorica, since he is the most businesslike man in the whole country. The word of a Turk in business matters is his bond, and in all such dealings he is strictly honourable. The Albanian is also a shrewd man of affairs, while the warriors of Montenegro, although good at a

bargain, are utterly outclassed when it comes to real business. The Montenegrin, as I said before, despises every kind of labour, and under this heading he unfortunately classes business dealings, probably thinking it beneath his dignity to be mixed up in anything other than a bloodthirsty fight. The Montenegrins are content to stroll about like conquerors, to sit outside the little cafés, and to discuss national affairs in their usual grand manner, while in the background the shrewd Albanian and the businesslike Turk laugh in their capacious sleeves, and divide between them the visible wealth of Podgorica.

King Nikolas, who has accurately gauged his people's character, is fully aware of this failing. That is one of his gravest troubles, since it hinders the development of the country in a hundred different ways. One day the King summoned the chief men in Montenegro and, before their very eyes, planted a stout vine with his own hands; furthermore, he caused to be erected in front of his Palace a smith's forge, and under the shamed gaze of the same illustrious company he hammered a horseshoe into shape. Surely, if such work was good enough for their "Gospodar," it was good enough for them.

Another splendid example the King sets his countrymen is during the great yearly festival, when each of his male subjects journeys to Cetinje, in order to kiss their lord's hands; at such times the King insists upon their first kissing the hand of his Queen. This is to make the men respect their women-folk, for one of the

most serious drawbacks in the character of the nation is its harsh and unconscionable treatment of women.

Centuries of fighting, while converting the men into fighting units, have unfortunately transformed the women-folk into beasts of burden. To-day they are regarded as of vastly less importance and value than men; for instance, no woman, unless she is of high rank, is ever allowed to sit at the men's table, nor must she even sit in man's presence. In the remoter parts of the country a woman leaving a roomful of men does so backwards, while universal custom denies to woman a man's kiss. Men kiss one another, women kiss men's hands.

The kiss between men is a strange and uncomfortable custom; at least, so I, a stranger, found it. The Montenegrin kiss bears no resemblance to a kiss between Frenchmen or between Germans. It is as loud and solemn as a hand-smack, and echoes round the establishment for about a minute and a-half. I do not know which is the most embarrassing to a Britisher, to be solemnly kissed by half-a-dozen men, or to have his hand saluted by as many women.

In a previous chapter I remarked that water in the mountain villages is as precious as wine, and this is no exaggeration; often the nearest spring is a two-hours' journey down the rocky track into the valley, so that every drop is brought up by hand, and this endless labour falls to the lot of the women. Young girls of perhaps twelve, and old women, toil up the heart-breaking paths. It is very sad to see them resting their

heavy burdens upon some friendly rock while trying to straighten their backs. Perhaps you will see a pair of tall, handsome warriors making their way up the same road and passing these tired women without a glance, in all likelihood their own mother or sister.

Without doubt, it is a big blot upon the fair escutcheon of Montenegro, yet we must not forget the long years of fighting that are primarily responsible for this national failing.

On the other hand, no woman in Montenegro is ill-treated, nor may man lift hand against her. She may be compelled to work until she drops, but never will she be struck. In our own land we read in the papers day after day of drunken men ill-treating their wives and daughters, and it is with a feeling of shame that we have to acknowledge it.

In Montenegro during the fervent heat of a great vendetta women go scot-free, and even a man is safe so long as he is in the company of the women-folk.

In Turkey women are almost slaves, though they are not forced to labour: yet the Mohammedan religion teaches boys to regard their mother with love and honour, and not to imagine that disrespect is a form of manliness. The most deadly insult you can inflict on a Moslem is to affront his parents, and this example of Mohammedan teaching is a standing rebuke to Christian Montenegro.

CHAPTER VII

A PEEP AT MONTENEGRIN LIFE

THERE is no such thing as privacy in a Montenegrin home. For the most part the houses are built of stone, and have no upper storey. The street door of the house opens into one big room, which is bedroom, drawing-room, dining-room, nursery, and kitchen combined, a wonderful saving of space, to say the least of it. In one corner is a bed, in the middle of the room a table, and on one side a fireplace; and not infrequently the chimney is merely a hole in the roof. The door is always open, often even when the family are retiring for the night. People go into one another's houses at all hours; of an evening the men gather together in groups, or walk up and down the broad streets, congregating at the numerous little cafés, and talking of local affairs. Needless to add that their wives and daughters have no place in these assemblies, but are doing their humble duty in preparing their lord and master's supper against his return.

One of the popular amusements is that of listening to the "*Gushla*." This is a one-stringed instrument, a cross between a violin and a banjo. It is played with a bent bow, and the most talented performer in the land

MARKET DAY.

finds it almost an impossibility to extract the faintest semblance of music from its interior; at least, to my ears that seemed to be the case.

Like the troubadours of old, the performer is usually a blind musician, who sings a popular legend, or, more often still, recounts in verse the great deeds of some local hero—how valiantly he fought the Turk, the number of "noses" he collected, or his latest border-fight. Often the hero himself is among the listeners, and this circumstance always adds to the general enjoyment.

The Montenegrins possess a wonderful gift of long-distance talking; they can speak with one another over a space of some five miles. Think of it, and try just how far you can make yourself heard. It is not by the mere volume of sound, but by a peculiar use of the throat. A man will speak from a village to his son who is tending the sheep far up on the hill-side and invisible to the naked eye. No stranger can acquire the gift, practise as much as he will. Children begin to talk thus at a very early age, and gradually increase the distance as they grow older. In fact, it is a kind of national, human telephone, and very valuable it has often proved.

Not long ago a man committed a theft, and at once made for the frontier, some fifteen miles distant. The theft was discovered, and by means of this strange power the human telephone warned the border guards, who caught the man ere he could leave the country. Although the people are so frugal, and eat but little food,

they certainly make up for their abstemiousness upon feast days, and at other times of rejoicing. At Christmas, or Easter, on the occasion of a marriage or the anniversary of some victory, they gorge themselves to repletion. It astounds the stranger in Montenegro to see the amount of food the people are able to cram down their throats; for three days on end they will eat and drink continuously.

The Montenegrin conception of honouring a stranger is to provide him with unlimited provisions, and the unfortunate visitor to the country during a popular rejoicing is honoured in a way that makes him loathe the very sight of food for weeks afterwards.

In the Greek Church Christmas Day falls upon January 6th, and this is a time of great rejoicing. For days before Christmas every member of the family is busy collecting wood until there is scarcely room to move either in or around the houses. Upon the great day itself the living-room is strewn with clean straw, and the Christmas dinner is eaten sitting upon the natural carpet, in the manner of the old heroes of Greece. Even the Royal Family make a point of doing likewise.

Upon Christmas Eve the head of the house wishes his people all happiness, and casts the first log upon the fire; the guests do the same, and a huge fire is kept up for three days and nights. The surrounding hills are deep in snow, and it is a fine sight at night to see the blazing hearths roaring a welcome.

A true fighting man is an ardent lover of hospitality. Again, like the heroes of Homer, the Montenegrins

keep open house; the stranger is given a welcome of welcomes, and is treated to so much good cheer that he is apt to experience, presumably, the feelings of a tightly-stuffed sausage.

Pigs and sheep are roasted whole, and all the while the air is filled with shouts of hearty merriment, and the continuous rattle of revolver shots.

Easter is a time of similar scenes. To the stranger, however, it is an even more embarrassing period, on account of the hard-boiled eggs. There is a favourite game with these eggs, whose shells are coloured blue or red, played by two men, each with an egg of different colour. They hold their eggs in their big palms, and strike the pointed ends sharply together. One egg is soon cracked, and the victorious egg tackles its neighbour.

There was once a man who possessed an egg so hard that it seemed to bear a charmed life, for red or blue antagonist it cared not, but cracked egg after egg, until at last it stood triumphant among a heap of shells. The owner of this marvel was asked to exhibit his egg, but this he refused to do. Thereupon a quarrel arose, and, as is the custom, out flashed revolvers. Several men were wounded, but the owner of the unbreakable egg was killed. As he fell his egg dropped on to the hard stone floor, yet rolled unharmed away. Upon examination it proved to be a coloured, cleverly-shaped stone.

Moral: Don't play practical jokes with gentlemen carrying loaded revolvers, with ten-inch barrels and half-inch bores.

The eggs are all eaten, and the largest, hardest, and therefore most indigestible are carefully saved for the guests. Many a healthy digestion for eggs has been utterly ruined by a chance visit to Montenegro at Easter, and the unhappy stranger once thus surfeited invariably conceives a violent dislike to hens for ever afterwards. There are many queer superstitions among the wilder mountaineers, who believe in sorcery and wizards, and have great faith in talismans, charms, amulets, and so forth.

On Christmas Night you must hang an ivy branch over the door; on Saint Jean's Eve, if you rub your chest with pure oil it is a sure preventive against sorcery for a whole year. On the same evening, the best way to preserve oneself from evil spirits and wicked goblins is to go out on the hills, and to jump over the fires lighted by the shepherds. The ringing of bells quells storms and tempests, by putting to flight the witches hiding in the clouds.

If you see a snake, do not touch it, for its business in this world is to live over and guard buried treasure. It is unlucky to have three candles burning at the same time, so is the birth of a black lamb. It is equally unlucky to spill salt, or cross sticks or knives, to enter a house left foot first, or sit down seven or thirteen at table, by which you will see that the Montenegrins include several of our own superstitions.

The Montenegrins are deeply religious, and in the large room in every house hangs a sacred Eikon. These Eikons are old images of saints wrought in silver, and

sometimes in gold. They are greatly treasured, apart from their intrinsic value, and are handed down as heirlooms from father to son for generations. Before each Eikon there is suspended a small silver lamp, and, whenever possible, some holy relic; before these shrines the members of the household pray.

To the Montenegrins, religion is a very real and serious matter. Living upon the borderland, they are continually called upon to defend their Faith against Catholic and Mohammedan alike.

CHAPTER VIII

"HATCHES, MATCHES, AND DISPATCHES"

THE Montenegrin baby must of necessity be the hardiest little being in the whole wide world. If once a Montenegrin survives infancy, the roughest existence can henceforth hold no terrors for him. Baby is strapped tightly into its great wooden cradle, which has a flat, box-like bottom and rockers. If baby cries, and babies mostly do, he is covered with several folds of thick blanket, resembling a piece of felt, and is rocked in a way that would quickly reduce any ordinary child to a condition of chronic hysteria; one could picture his little body a mass of bruises, and with some dislocated limb—but, bless you! he emerges from the ordeal scot-free, and crawls over the rough rocks as healthy young crabs might. Tumbling here and there, he soon begins to walk, and quite quickly becomes as nimble and sure-footed as a mountain goat.

Women cannot, of course, fight like men, and are not regarded as their equals; consequently the birth of a daughter is looked upon more as a misfortune than a blessing, and therefore meets with no rejoicing as does the advent of a baby boy. A man will announce the

birth of his daughter to expectant comrades with the words, "Comrades, excuse me—a girl."

Until thirty years ago the population was only counted as so many "rifles," that is to say, supposing one of the walled villages to contain two hundred men, each with his "handjar" and rifle; two hundred women, three hundred children, with forty lusty boys, of whom thirty were able to shoot and had guns, and say sixty old men and women, then that place would be said to have two hundred and thirty inhabitants, non-fighters going absolutely uncounted.

So fierce and continuous was the fighting that children were born, figuratively, "with a bullet in the mouth and a taste of powder on the tongue." Directly they can walk they are hard at work, helping their mothers or carrying food and ammunition to their fathers. However, as soon as a boy is strong enough to hold a gun he is taught to shoot, and supposing there is a border raid, he will fight by his father's side, while his little baby sister's fingers instinctively try to load the guns.

Thus, the present generation has been born in an atmosphere of fighting, like their fathers before them. If a father or brother be shot, "a man does not weep over his dead, he avenges them."

Boys and girls go to school, mostly during the winter months, for in summer the schoolmaster usually takes to the hills with his flocks; as the country becomes richer King Nikolas is establishing proper schools wherever he can, and is having the very teachers themselves "sent to school."

The men and, of course, the boys are fond of shooting, and are continually practising. They invariably rest their guns upon some rock, and generally require a fairly long time to take aim; given these conditions, they are for the most part good shots, but above everything they are fondest of cold steel, and delight in a hand-to-hand encounter, fastening upon their foes with reckless bravery.

It was never the custom in these savage wars to take prisoners, and a man who fell was reckoned a dead man. If one of their comrades was so badly hurt as to be unable to move, he would strive to prop himself against a boulder and shoot to the last, and rather than be left, if his companions were forced to retreat, he would ask to be shot by a friendly and merciful hand, a request that was always granted.

I recount these incidents in order to show how savage and cruel and hard has been the Montenegrin upbringing, and one cannot wonder that a boy reared among such scenes should attain manhood at a surprisingly early age, and view life through different eyes than ours.

The girls marry very young, from twelve to fifteen as a rule. Marriages are usually arranged by the fathers; a son desirous of taking a wife will speak to his father, and patiently wait until a suitable girl has been selected. Next, her dowry is bargained for, and this being found satisfactory, the marriage takes place. Men of Podgorica marry girls of Nikšić and Kolašin; it is usual to take a girl from a distance. If a young man has a fancy

YOUNG TURKS AT PODGORICA.

for one particular girl, he may marry her if the matter can be arranged, but as men and women mix together so little, there is not much opportunity for the usual love-making.

It is no uncommon thing to see a young mother of fifteen years of age nursing her baby, while the infant's grandmother of nearly thirty years of age is gathering sticks, and maybe another generation or two of great-grandmothers of forty-five and even sixty years are toiling in the sun.

Occasionally a Montenegrin becomes infatuated with a Turkish girl, in which case lively doings invariably result. The Turks are naturally opposed to such marriages for their daughters, since the girls have to join the Greek Church and become Christians. The Montenegrin, therefore, arranges a romantic elopement, and with a few friends carries through the affair. The whole town is in a state of excitement, and everybody carries loaded firearms for some time; generally, the Montenegrin Governor interviews the bereaved father, and then matters gradually cool down. It is only from among the Turkish families living in Montenegro that these marriages occur, otherwise such unions would lead to general war.

A marriage is an occasion for great festivity and rejoicing, the principal amusement of which is eating and drinking, varied only by drinking and eating. Salvos of revolver and rifle shots greet the happy pair, and the festivities are kept up for the usual three days. All the town are welcome, and generally bring

gifts, and even food to add to the prolongation of the feast.

Death, when it comes, alas! too frequently, is a time of deep mourning. The body of the dead "hero" is laid in state in the living-room, beside it the women weep gently, and the male relatives enter the chamber singly; ripping open their shirts, they beat themselves violently upon the chest, utterly woebegone, and giving vent to the deepest lamentation. In the remoter parts of Montenegro death will give rise to exhibitions of most acute grief and overwrought passion, the men vying with each other in their demonstration of sorrow, sometimes inflicting serious bodily wounds in the process, the women keeping up the death dirge for days on end, until the very hills reverberate with sounds of woe.

Now and then as you pass a house you will hear a woman chanting the death-song, with long-drawn-out wail; and old women while at their work are often apt to break out in similar strain, in memory of some loved one long since dead.

CHAPTER IX

TRUE TALES OF THE SAVAGE BORDERLAND

From Podgorica to Kolašin the road passes for a space along the Frontier of Albania. It is a wild spot, for a river comes tumbling through a deep and rugged ravine, while upon either side the giant mountains tower until they seem to pierce the sky. Many men have passed over here intent upon killing, led on by the lust of slaughter alone. To step upon the farther bank is to court death, since the unwritten law is that an armed trespasser may be shot at sight.

For the most part the frontier is an invisible line, a range of hills or a wooded valley. Now and then a band of Albanians will cross into Montenegro and drive back a dozen head of fine cattle, to be followed hot-foot by Montenegrin vengeance, in the form of a score of armed warriors. Then the silence of the hills is broken by the crack of rifles, and in due course the Montenegrins return with sadly lessened numbers, but in triumph, or, having met an overwhelming number of the enemy, they take shelter among the rocks, and retreat as best they can, fighting fiercely to the last.

The following narratives I take from Mr. Reginald

Wyon, who spent some time in Montenegro, and has published an interesting book upon that country.*

One of the most famous of the border heroes was Voivoda Marko, who began life as a shepherd boy, and died a national hero, with the title of Voivoda (Duke) conferred upon him by King Nikolas. To-day you will hear his name and his famous deeds sung to the tuneless strumming of the "*Gushla.*"

Before Marko reached his twentieth birthday he had killed many Turks; later on he collected a few equally bold spirits, and together they made raids upon any Moslem soldiers that happened to pass near their homes. So daring were his deeds that King Nikolas heard of them, and, sending for Marko, gave him a place among his own personal bodyguard, a great honour, since that favoured body is recruited only from picked men.

Marko remained near his "Gospodar" until he was twenty-five, at which age he returned to his mountains, and, gathering a large band about him, began to make raids and harry the Turk at every opportunity. Fierce and skilful were his adventures, and quickly the name of Marko came to be dreaded among the Moslems, who dared not venture out, save in large numbers, and then only in full readiness for battle.

As Podgorica lay close to the mountains wherein Marko dwelt, the Pasha or Turkish Governor of the town, by name Yussuf Mučič, became enraged at the continual complaints that reached him, and offered a

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* "The Land of the Black Mountain."

large reward for the Christian's head. There were no volunteers for the dangerous work until a prisoner, lying in Podgorica jail under sentence of death, offered to make the attempt upon condition that, if successful, he should have both freedom and reward. Fully armed, he set out upon his mission, and two days later his dead body was found in a ravine.

The Pasha was furious, and cried out aloud that, were he not forbidden to leave Podgorica by reason of his high office, he would desire nothing better than to meet Marko face to face, and fight him to the death. These boastful words were quickly carried to Marko's ears, and, without hesitating, the young Montenegrin quitted the safety of his mountains and rode his horse straight for Podgorica, clattering through the ill-paved streets, and drawing rein before the palace of the Pasha a little before noon.

"I am here, Yussuf," he cried in a loud voice, "to answer thy challenge. Come out, therefore, and meet me, man to man."

The Pasha heard these words and knew at once who spoke them, but his courage failed him, and at the critical moment his blood turned to water. Obeying his command, one of his women went to the window and called out that Yussuf Pasha was away. Marko knew this to be a lie, and, turning upon the trembling circle of Turks that had gathered about him, cried in a loud voice, heard by every single one there:

"Take notice, all, that the challenge is now withdrawn, that I refuse to meet in single combat your

Pasha, Yussuf Mučič, for I, Marko, fight only with men, not cowards."

Wheeling his horse about, he galloped through the terror-stricken throng, to freedom. So terrible and open had been the insult that the Pasha was beside himself with rage, and began to put into force the great powers with which his master, the Sultan, had invested him. Marko's people began to fear for their beloved leader, whose life was too precious to be sacrificed by a treacherous knife-stab, since its preservation was of the greatest importance to Montenegro.

While Marko pursued his dauntless way, his people put their heads together, and determined that the only way to save their hero was by the death of the Pasha. A young man was selected, who willingly accepted the mission, although he knew it meant certain death.

This young man, scarcely twenty, was a true son of the Black Mountain, for, cleverly smuggling himself into Podgorica disguised as a Turk, he stationed himself before the Pasha's Konak, or Palace, and waited patiently for Yussuf's appearance. Presently the Pasha emerged surrounded by his officials, when with the utmost coolness the young man raised his pistol and shot the Turk dead. The brave man was instantly cut to pieces by the Pasha's bodyguard, but Marko was saved to Montenegro.

Among the traits that place Marko above his countrymen was that of mercy. It is recorded how generously he treated his enemies, liberating his prisoners without hesitation. A perfect shot, and

possessed of wonderful muscular development and iron will, he was, like King Nikolas, both a warrior and a poet, and though living amid continual warfare and bloodshed he nevertheless preserved intact all the virtues of a true gentleman.

During the last war the Battle of Fundina was won entirely through Marko's skill and bravery, and to him Montenegro owes a large slice of her new territory. The hero's body is buried at Medun, his simple mountain home. The King desired to have him interred at Podgorica with great pomp, and would have done so but for his dying wish to lie for ever amid the scenes of his great deeds and among the people he loved so well.

CHAPTER X

TALES OF THE VENDETTA

Here are two further tales of men living in or near Podgorica to-day, for which I am again indebted to Mr. Reginald Wyon, who knew the chief characters personally, and heard their stories from the men's own lips.

The following life history was recounted by a man called Kećo, a leading figure of the borderland, grown old before his time.

"Though my hands tremble and my hair is growing white," he said, "I do not fear death: this house I have built is strong, and I have money that will provide for my wife. They have tried to kill me twice, but they do not find it easy: the last time seven hid themselves by the house, their rifles ready, but they dared not shoot, since my wife was with me."

I have explained before, that even during the heat of a vendetta a woman's life is sacred as is that of the man with her; should a woman by any mischance shoot a man, she is exempt, and the blood-guiltiness falls upon her husband or his surviving relatives. To continue Kećo's tale: it seems that he possessed a cow, of which he was particularly proud; one night it vanished

A MOSLEM WOMAN AT SCUTARI.

from his home, and the strictest search failed to discover it. The same day Kećo visited Podgorica market, where he encountered a wealthy Turk, by name Achmet, with whom he was not upon good terms: the Turk asked Kećo where his beautiful cow had got to, and, after hearing the story of its loss, tauntingly informed Kećo that he (Achmet) had stolen it the previous night.

In Podgorica no man may draw a weapon, so that Kećo was perforce compelled to listen in helpless fury to his enemy's insults, and afterwards to return empty-handed to his house. Failing to get any satisfaction from the authorities Kećo, with two companions, determined to regain his cow and exact vengeance; let him therefore finish the tale himself.

"I did not go at night, like a thief, but when the sun was highest, and all men could see me. I left my comrades outside Achmet's house, and went in alone. There I found my cow, but only the women were present. So I drove my cow and her calf out of the door towards my comrades. Then lest any should think that I was afraid, I fired my rifle into the air. Very soon the men came running from the fields—Achmet and his son.

"When they saw me and my cow they came towards me firing, but their bullets flew wide. Then, taking careful aim, I shot Achmet dead, and afterwards his son. We then ran quickly, and though men pursued us, they were afraid to come too near, lest I should shoot them likewise, so we got safe back to Fundina.

"Since then the men of Dinos wait for me. They

will kill me soon, for the insult I have put upon them is very great, and the fame of my deed has travelled over the land."

Mr. Wyon asked Kećo why he stayed in Fundina and risked being murdered; why not go to Cetinje or Nikšić, where his enemies would not follow?

Kećo replied promptly: "Men know me for a hero. What would they say if I ran away and sought safety elsewhere? I should be a double coward, for I should leave my brother to inherit my fate. These men of Dinos are dogs, who love to kill their enemy in the night, but they shall not find me unprepared or sleeping."

This story is typical of Montenegro, and shows the ravaging effects of the fatal vendetta. No wonder King Nikolas tries all in his power to stamp out such a belief, which each year is responsible for the deaths of so many brave men.

In rare instances, where all the men-folk have been slain in a blood feud, one of the women will don man's attire and continue the vendetta. Under these circumstances the woman loses all the privileges of her sex, and is treated as a man, even giving and receiving the kiss upon the face, which is, we know, forbidden to women.

Here is another true story related to Mr. Wyon by Achmet Niko himself.

Achmet Niko was born in Podgorica, then in the Sultan's possession, and fought his first battle at fifteen, killing three men. At seventeen he was compelled to

fly from Podgorica, on account of a fatal fight, and at Scutari he became a gendarme. Then he was mixed up in a family affair and, having killed two of his enemies, returned to Podgorica. Remembering his original offence, the Pasha threw Achmet into prison, but he escaped and fled to Bosnia.

A series of adventures, many of them with fatal endings, for his opponents drove him to Antivari, now fell to his lot. At that time the Captain of Dolcigno (a neighbouring seaport) had been murdered by a fierce man called Jovan, who had afterwards escaped to Albania and joined one of the fierce tribes of these regions. Achmet was offered a free pardon if he would kill Jovan, and cheerfully he set off towards Albania. One day he rode back to Dolcigno with Jovan's severed head wrapped in a bundle, and for this famous deed King Nikolas gave him a hundred sovereigns and, close to Podgorica, an old fortress.

For many years Achmet fought with the Montenegrins against the Albanians, and won great honour in a land where all men are brave.

Jovan's brother attempted to shoot Achmet, but the latter was too quick, and actually captured his assailant alive. Once he was caught by the Turks. Here he was at the mercy of his bitterest foes, who shut him up in a powerful fortress, and loaded him to the ground with iron fetters.

Achmet's friends smuggled into his cell a file in a loaf of bread, and after strenuous efforts Achmet filed his way to freedom and, making a gallant dash, escaped.

Many of these border heroes are Moslems who have become naturalised Montenegrins. The King is ever ready to welcome anyone who will serve him honourably, and he has founded a very efficient frontier guard by giving his new subjects houses and ground upon the borderland, a favourite custom of those war-wise old Romans.

Had I the space, I could go on recounting similar thrilling anecdotes; for the present, however, I must continue the description of my journey through Montenegro, in which journey imaginably you are accompanying me.

CHAPTER XI

NIKŠIĆ AND THE OLD MONASTERY OF OSTROG.

To reach Nikšić, the Northern Capital of Montenegro, we must recross the old Vizier Bridge, and follow up the Great Plain of Zeta to where it ends in an amphitheatre of bare and rugged mountain heights. This plain luxuriates with heavy-foliaged trees and fertile crops. Here grows in profusion the little yellow flower, Pyrethum, from which is manufactured insect powder, one of Montenegro's chief industrial products. There are also rich pastures that afford excellent grazing-ground for cattle.

How different all this was thirty years ago, when gallant little Montenegro held no rights of proprietorship in this plain, and when from the barren fastnesses overlooking the valley her famished and even starving peasantry could only watch their oppressors, the unspeakable Turks, lording it with iron rule beneath their unwilling gaze.

The high road passes beside some ancient ruins, bearing the name of Dioclea, the birthplace, it is said, of the great Roman Emperor Diocletian, and certainly for many hundreds of years these lands were known by no other name.

Finally, this plain of Zeta narrows until it becomes completely hemmed in by bleak and scarred masses of mountain barrier, and our road, hewn out of the mountain-side, and forming, as it were, an almost natural escarpment, laboriously ascends on the left hand of the range, and overhanging the valley beneath. Above our heads great boulders of rock jut out from the precipitous face, looking as though they only needed the gentle touch of a Vila's hand to be dislodged, and, hurtling down, to wreck the road they so realistically threaten. Vilas, for the information of my readers, are legendary mountain-fairies, who are said to live in leafy woods and among rocky fissures and ravines, and are reputed to be remarkably beautiful and clever little ladies. So firmly established is this popular belief that young girls of the surrounding villages will often set out alone to those retreats to pour their troubles into the ears of these invisible folk for solace and relief.

Upon the opposite side of the valley, and not very far away, a road is cut that leads to the interesting old Monastery of Ostrog, a building which nestles aloft in the precipitous mountain-side like some daring eagle's eyrie.

Ostrog is famous throughout the Balkans as the burial-place of the remains of Saint Vasili, a very pious and holy man, who, in obedience to a vision, left his distant home, and, collecting much valuable building material, journeyed to Montenegro, to found a Monastery. He slept near Podgorica the first night, and in the morning discovered that all his possessions

had mysteriously disappeared. Searching the land over, he recovered them where Ostrog now is, and, interpreting the occurrence as a sign of divine direction, there and then established the present Monastery.

He lived for many years, preaching eloquently, and healing the sick and infirm. To-day his body lies in its stone coffin, watched over by the priests, and long streams of pilgrims go to Ostrog to pray at the Saint's tomb. Wonderful cures have taken place at this mountain sanctuary, the halt have walked, the sightless have seen, and the dumb have spoken; Ostrog is in fact the Lourdes of the Balkans.

It was here that Mirko, the father of King Nikolas, with a mere handful of men, performed one of those deeds for which his name is famous. In this cleft in the rock Mirko and his men were besieged by a large army of Turks who, failing to fight their way through to the Montenegrins, threw burning straw down upon them. Mirko's escape was a rare stroke of genius, for, with the loss of only one man, he led his warriors back in safety to their mountain homes.

Mirko Petrović, father of King Nikolas, is the "King Arthur" of Montenegrin history. He was a hero among heroes, and this, too, in a Land of Heroes.

Known to his countrymen by the proud title of "Sword of Montenegro," Mirko stands forth a glorious example of all that is chivalrous, brave, and noble. Wise in Council and first in Battle, a brilliant shot, and fearless swordsman, Mirko Petrović is acclaimed by posterity an ideal and worthy leader of his time.

He died, alas! of cholera during the terrible outbreak of fifty years ago; would that he might have died—for it was his fervent wish—at the head of his warriors, leading a forlorn hope.

Crossing the desolate mountains that divide the plains of Zeta and Nikšić, we pass through the wilds of the Crnagora, and at last emerge to sight a vast plain, towards which our road directs itself, though with an ever-winding course. In the centre of this plain lies Nikšić, the Northern Capital of Montenegro, sheltering itself, as it were, under the wings of its famous old Castle. Thirty years ago this strong fortress was held by a large garrison of Turks, who put to flight the few Montenegrins of the locality, to suffer starvation in the hills.

Although Nikšić was composed of only a few miserable hovels huddled together beneath the shadow of the powerful citadel, the possession of the place was of the most vital importance to the future of Montenegro. Commanding the whole of the surrounding plain, with its rich pastures and fertile crops, Nikšić, as part of the warrior-kingdom, would mean the extension of Montenegro to double its then area, and it was therefore well worth making a supreme and desperate effort to capture it. King Nikolas called for volunteers, and personally led a daring assault upon the almost impregnable structure. Gazing at the towering walls, one could scarcely credit that mad attack, and yet so recklessly brave were the Montenegrins that, following their fearless King, they carried the defences by sheer

ALBANIANS OUTSIDE SCUTARI.
(Note the Lake Dwellers in the background.

hand-to-hand fighting, and, falling furiously upon the well-armed Turks, literally hacked them to pieces.

Under Montenegrin rule Nikšić soon became an important town, and, as we have before said, the Northern Capital. Its big market-square is surrounded by low, single-storeyed houses. Here the people are purely Montenegrin, and very wild, sitting over their baskets of fruit and vegetables with loaded guns across the knees; quaint, uncouth country-folk, but jovial and hearty, and prodigally hospitable.

Nikšić is proud of its one and only brewery, which turns out quite excellent beer, a novel drink for Montenegrins, yet much liked. Another popular industry that flourishes throughout Montenegro, and whose rapid growth has been truly remarkable, is the State manufacture of cigarettes. Not only are these articles both cheap and of excellent flavour, but each cigarette is fitted with a neat cork tip, and the goods are packed in boxes of distinctive design.

I spent one whole afternoon exploring the Castle, whose existence being no longer a necessity is now threatened; the structure is slowly decaying, beginning here and there to crumble away. As I was climbing towards the ancient gateway I encountered a Montenegrin of distinguished appearance and rich attire. With that charming hospitality I had experienced during my sojourn in Montenegro, he accosted me courteously and insisted upon accompanying me to act as cicerone. Fortunately, my newly-made friend spoke Italian, and thus we were able to converse together. I can honestly

say I never met with a more interesting companion, for he recounted many thrilling anecdotes.

We wandered all over the old place until dusk, and as the sun was sinking in a blaze of blood-red splendour, silhouetting the rugged mountains so that they looked like a row of gigantic teeth, black and sinister, we climbed to the summit of the massive battlements. Gazing from this lofty height down to where the rough, rock ground was almost lost in the growing dusk, I marvelled anew at the dauntless courage that King Nikolas and his loyal warriors showed when they stormed these self-same walls at the point of the sword.

The King has built a new Palace at Nikšić, and close by a Cathedral has been erected. There was once much talk of moving the Capital hither, but the isolated position of Nikšić, together with the expense of such an undertaking, finally killed the proposal. Yet in spite of the increasing evidence of approaching civilisation you may hear the good folk of Nikšić speak of anywhere away from Montenegro as in "the world outside."

CHAPTER XII

A PEEP AT SCUTARI

From Nikšić we must return to Podgorica, where we are barely a dozen miles distant from the Lake of Scutari, by a broad road leading to Plavica, the tiny port upon the low banks of a sluggish river.

Each day a steamer sails from Scutari, the Capital of Albania, to the Montenegrin shores, and returns therefrom in the evening. The single journey occupies as a rule nearly four hours, and the steamer passes up the centre of the lake, so that the traveller gets a good view of the mountain ranges of savage Albania. About halfway we cross the invisible Turkish frontier, for more than half the lake lies within the Sultan's domains. Every now and then we pass quite close to a pelican, comporting itself with all the absurd solemnity of its tribe, for there are many of these large birds on the lake; besides, innumerable smaller-winged game abound, and in addition there is fine fishing.

My last visit to Scutari happened to fall during *Ramadhan*, the Mohammedan Lenten period or time of fasting. During this month no true believer allows a single particle of food to pass his lips between the hours of sunrise and sunset. Naturally, the sight of a well-

fed Christian is an abomination to a Moslem, and therefore upon my arrival I found the mixed populace not only manifesting its ill-humour, but bordering almost upon frenzy.

Upon landing, the stranger is subjected to much questioning and annoyance, besides having to endure incessant demands for "baksheesh" (money).

We pass through the Bazaar, which is a town in itself, being composed of wooden houses with open fronts, and whose roofs almost meet each other and so shelter the dirty streets beneath from the sun's scorching rays and the heaviest rains. Here the Turks sit cross-legged among their wares, looking as though they were in huge wooden packing-cases; and during *Ramadhan* they are forbidden to touch even a cigarette. Under these circumstances it is not considered safe for a Christian to smoke in the Bazaar, for he will cause a riot, since for a Moslem to even breathe the smoke from another's cigarette is to break the Law of the Prophet.

The firing of a cannon announces sunset, and a few moments before the expected signal the hungry worshippers of Mohammed may be seen with a carefully-made cigarette in one hand and a glowing lump of charcoal held ready by the other. Boom! goes the gun, and a hundred glowing cigarettes are dancing in the twilight, while a merry clatter of shutting-up shop has taken the place of the usual quietness. Until the sun appears again these Turks will feast and smoke, fortifying themselves for the morrow's fast.

Scutari is a very dirty place, and the smells are

appalling, and one witnesses scenes that belie the very name of Europe. In and around Scutari one is among a race of people who live in a state of almost constant warfare. On market days large numbers of Catholic Albanians come into Scutari to trade; they arrive early in the morning, and take up their positions upon the open plain outside the Bazaar. Whole families are there, usually father and two or three sons, armed to the teeth with rifle, handjar and revolver, and dressed in the picturesque costumes so familiar at Podgorica; with them are their women in short white dresses, wearing a deep silver belt round their waists, and with possibly two or three children clothed in heavy white felt garments that would half smother a little civilised boy or girl. Two or three mules bearing market produce complete the picture, and when the vegetables and fruit are laid out for inspection the men stand over them with firearms ready to hand in case of sudden attack, for you must know that everybody in Scutari goes about the daily tasks in momentary expectation of an unpleasant surprise. If you were to shut up two Kilkenny cats in a small packing-case, you would scarcely expect them to lie down together lamb-like any more than you would expect Christian and Mohammedan Albanians to fraternise within the white walls of the same town. Now it is a Christian who is the aggressor, now a Moslem.

No so very long ago the Christians, being tired of their Moslem neighbours' taunt of "unbelieving dogs," determined to insult their hereditary enemies by the

most revolting means in their power. You will remember how the Indian Mutiny first broke out, when the native troops were given cartridges said to have been greased with pig's fat, for the pig and also the calf are regarded by all true followers of the Prophet Mohammed as unclean. Knowing this, some of the Christians of Scutari slew a large fat pig, and left its bleeding body in the doorway of the largest Mosque in the town; as further insult they threw the entrails of the animal down the well in the courtyard, thus poisoning the water.

Imagine the result. As a lighted match applied to gunpowder, so did this gross insult cause the Moslem population to rise as one man, only to be met by the Christians ever eager for a fight. The Sultan's Governor acted with commendable promptitude, and stationed two regiments between the contending parties, with orders for them to shoot down friend or foe without distinction. It was only after several disturbances had been thus quelled, with the usual fatalities, that bloodshed on a large scale was avoided.

As you walk through the Bazaar of Scutari you can picture yourself back in the wonderful pages of the "Arabian Nights," and many are the strange figures that sit cross-legged and imperturbable in the shadows of their open shops, eyeing the Christian with sullen and contemptuous stare, scarcely deigning to notice his presence, save perhaps to draw aside flowing draperies that might suffer contamination from the shoes of the Infidel.

Clearly, anybody who is tired of a quiet, humdrum

existence could not do better than take up his residence in Scutari; let him smoke a cigarette during *Ramadhan*, and in addition take his kodak into the Bazaar. I have no hesitation in saying that he will not experience a dull moment during his short stay there.

I cannot say that I was altogether sorry when the low-roofed town faded into the distance, and only the noble old Castle set high on its superb eminence asserted its proud position as the dominant landmark of the Capital of savage Albania.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE SEABOARD OF MONTENEGRO

From Scutari we return by steamer to Montenegro, but instead of disembarking at Plavanita, the port of Podgorica, we remain on board to the end of the journey, Vir Pazar.

Vir Pazar is built upon what is really an island, in the centre of a marshy valley between lofty mountains. The road to and from the town is banked high, since the Lake of Scutari often rises and floods the town to such a depth as to compel the inhabitants to take refuge in upper rooms, which are generally the living apartments. The only outlet to the lake is at Scutari, and the Turks are too lazy to clear the river of the refuse which yearly blocks it.

At Vir Pazar the life is purely Montenegrin, for it is away from Albania. As the sun's rays pour down upon the busy market scene, it almost dazzles one's eyes to look at the brilliant, motley colours, the blues, reds, greens, and golds bedecking the people; while, for sombre contrast, there rise those eternal mountains of the same grey, cruel rock.

Although this scene is a gay one, we cannot forget that Vir Pazar was also the scene of the Montenegrin

VIR PAZAR, UPON THE LAKE OF SCUTARI. *Page 51.*
(Note the road winding its way over the barren rocks.)

Vespers. In 1702, soon after the death of William III. of England, and the accession of good Queen Anne, the ruler of the Crnagora, Prince Danilo, was asked by the Christians under Turkish rule near Podgorica to consecrate a new church. In those times the reigning Prince was also the Chief Bishop. It was King Nikolas' uncle who wisely separated the two offices. The Governor of Scutari, Dervish Pasha, gave his sworn safeguard, and Prince Danilo, himself the soul of honour, descended without hesitation from his mountains to fulfil the pious request.

The mission accomplished, Prince Danilo was upon the point of returning, when he was treacherously seized by command of Dervish Pasha, consigned to prison, tortured, and finally ordered to be hanged. Frugal yet poor as the Montenegrins were, nevertheless they were able to offer sufficient ransom to satisfy the cupidity of the Turk, thus securing their Prince's release.

Among the Montenegrins there lived a large number of Turks who were allowed to carry on their business unmolested. After the capture of their Prince the mountaineers determined that henceforth there should be no renegade left in the land, and a solemn meeting was held, at which five brothers were chosen as leaders. At Vir Pazar upon Christmas Eve the great work of vengeance began; every Turk was offered the choice between Christianity and the Sword. Those who embraced the Faith were troubled no further, those who did not were instantly killed, so that Christmas Morning, 1703, broke red in the East, and Montenegro awoke

to find herself united at last—in Faith and Freedom alike.

From Vir Pazar we set out over the Sutormann Pass, which crosses a mountain range three thousand feet in height, that separates the Lake of Scutari from the sea.

A quaint little railway over the Pass has been built by an Italian company, and each day an engine and two carriages wind their slow way across these heights. We should consider the service as scarcely worth notice, the whole concern a mere toy; but the Montenegrins regard it as something of a miracle.

I travelled by road, which one must always do to get a fair knowledge of the country. It is a precipitous route ascending the side of those giant hills, and the higher we rise the better we obtain that remarkable bird's-eye view of all Montenegro, which lies beneath us like a huge relief map. Wave after wave of mountains stretch before us, that lose themselves in infinity.

Upon the summit of the Pass stands a noble old Castle, taken by the Montenegrins at the sword's point thirty years ago. The Castle's large Turkish garrison held the Pass until one night a band of Montenegrins, travelling by paths at giddy heights and along almost impassable precipices, surprised and slaughtered them. Thus Montenegro won her way to the sea, and gained the ports of Antivari and Dolcigno.

The Adriatic lies far beneath us, a wide expanse of deep blue, and in our faces blows a glorious breeze, salt-flavoured, that reminds us of our own home. It

invigorates us as a cool drink to a thirsty traveller, for our home is an island, and our inheritance the sea.

Antivari lies two miles inland from the beautiful bay, and possesses a Castle, once the finest in the Balkans. The bay is magnificent, and a powerful syndicate once offered a vast sum of money to King Nikolas if he would allow them to erect there a Casino similar to that of Monte Carlo. King Nikolas, whose ancestors ruled the land for five hundred years, replied, as one would expect him to: "I am a leader of MEN," he said, "not the keeper of a gambling saloon."

Montenegro's other port is Dolcigno, but like Antivari it is too exposed to rough weather; besides, the Powers do not allow her to possess a Navy, consequently the coast is always open to a possible attack by Austrian warships. Montenegro gains, it is true, an outlet for her produce, but otherwise obtains no advantage whatever from her seaports.

CHAPTER XIV

A PEEP AT POLITICS

Throughout this little book I have been careful not to dwell upon Politics, for one might easily fill a volume upon this single subject alone. The Balkan States, or the Near East, as they are more often described, have for ages proved a stumbling-block in the path of European Peace. As we have seen, the Turks conquered a vast area of the European Continent in the Middle Ages, but from the moment their combative power began to decline they have been forced to relinquish province after province; and it has been solely the question of who shall possess these recovered lands that has been and still is the cause of so much friction between the Great Powers. Bulgaria, Servia and Roumania regained their freedom and independence, and by the common consent of Europe were permitted to become separate kingdoms; yet although they are nominally independent, they are nevertheless to a great extent under the invisible control of one or other of their powerful neighbours, Russia and Austria, behind whom stand France and Germany. Thirty-five years

ago the Christians in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and the Herzegovina revolted against their Turkish rulers, who were massacring the defenceless peasants.

In order to stop these terrible atrocities Austria dispatched her armies across the frontier, and by so doing saved thousands of valuable and innocent lives. The Great Powers met at Berlin to determine what should be done, and as clearly they could not allow the Turks to return to these provinces, therefore they handed them over to Austria in reward for her inestimable services, and at the same time acknowledged the freedom of Montenegro. This arrangement or compact was called the Treaty of Berlin, of which you have heard so much of late.

Austria has worked wonders for Montenegro's one-time unhappy neighbours. She has built roads and railways, instituted Schools and Courts of Justice, so that to-day the Moslem and the Christian are able to dwell together in unity, with perfect equality and impartial justice for all, and are very much happier than they ever were under Turkish rule.

In this way the Austrian Eagle has buried its talons in an appreciable slice of the rich Balkans, and the Russian Bear has been growling ever since. But Bulgaria, Servia and Montenegro spring from the same Slavonic source as Russia, speak almost the same tongue, and belong to the self-same Greek Church, so that Russia by advancing money to her little friends in the Balkans reaped in return firm allies with whom to stem the Austrian advance. Now you begin to glimpse

the real powers that loom ever more and more distinctly in connection with the present Balkan War.

Although the Turks have held these provinces in Europe for five hundred years, they are in reality an Asiatic people, and, as such, have no real right to these possessions, save, of course, the right of the sword. So long as they maintained their military efficiency their hold was secure, but during the last few decades Turkey has been undergoing a speedy dissolution, not to say revolution of its own. The old Sultan Abdul Hamid was deposed, and a new party styling themselves the Young Turks came into being. The result has been indescribable corruption in both Services, but especially in the military one, surpassing by far the corruption that existed under the old régime.

The little Balkan kingdoms, noticing the rapid weakening of their relentless and once unassailable enemy, determined to combine together in a supreme effort to free for all time their Christian brothers in Albania and Macedonia, aided by Greece, who had to settle many old scores with terrible interest.

Who should strike the first blow? Here there was momentary hesitation on the part of the four Greatest Powers until Montenegro pluckily stepped into the arena, and with the highest courage fired the first shot in a great campaign, a campaign that will materially alter the map of Europe.

I do not need to detail the already wonderful and almost miraculous result of the war, or the grave lesson it teaches us, for as I write the facts are before our eyes

—the shattering for ever of Turkey-in-Europe, the downfall of inefficiency and unpreparedness before the onslaught of fervent patriotism and perfect organisation.

I am only concerned here with the share Montenegro has taken, how for almost the first time she has been the attacker and the Turks the defenders; the overwhelming privations bordering upon actual starvation, coupled with the severest and most embarrassing weather, she has been forced to face; how scant, too, her hospital resources, for, as of old, a man who falls is reckoned a man dead. It is a harrowingly grim and awful tale of slaughter as fort after fort succumbs to or repels the Montenegrin attack upon Scutari.

It is Scutari that Montenegro will claim when Peace has succeeded War, and by so doing she will extend her frontiers until they encompass the whole of the Great Lake. This will mean a vast expanse of new territory, and by its acquisition Montenegro will be regaining the land of her people, held ere the Turk defiled the soil of Europe. It will be a great triumph for King Nikolas, that probably long before he is gathered to his fathers he will leave his countrymen no longer a small band of warriors unrecognised by the world, and a prey to a usurping foe, but a nation honoured among nations, with settled frontiers extended a hundredfold, and a great and glorious future before her as the pluckiest of the Balkan Powers.

Let us express our fervent and heartfelt hope that in the years to come prosperity, aided by our ever-encroaching modern civilisation, will not overshadow

Montenegro's primitive virtues. Better by far that her children remain, as they have ever been, chaste and frugal, brave and honest, rather than that they imbibe the social unrest of their more advanced neighbours. What matter their rough bearing and their abrupt speech, so long as truth is their watchword and honour their goal? Let them jealously retain their picturesque costumes—tributes to ancestral barbaric splendour—since, by so doing, they will serve to remind them of the sterling stock from which Montenegro has sprung, for surely not even King Arthur and his Champion Knights of the Round Table could boast of loftier aims, or more cleanly and honourably lived lives than those of the Grand Old Heroes of the Crnagora.

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